

The Development of Thai Contemporary Art and Its Influences: Overlay Memories, Overlay Imaging and Individual Spiritual Identity

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ABSTRACT

This project was the creative and qualitative research aimed to develop and disseminate the information through the project and its result related to 3 key concerns consisting of; 1. To study and develop the artworks that represented the individual spiritual development. 2. To analyse the gained specific insight associated with the art practice and its relationships to the artistic creative process and the artistic learning processes. 3. To study the artworks and its influences in terms of the development of the concept related to attitude, experiences, cultural roots, and the spiritual development. The research methodology would be the combination of the review of literature and the art practice exploration alongside with its analysis and discussion within the descriptive form. Through the research finding, it could be divided into 3 crucial parts, which are namely; 1. The artistic creative process (the process of art making) 1.1 The concept and its relationships to the background and cultural roots, 1.2 The artistic forms and techniques. 2. The artistic Learning Processes 3. The symbolism in art. In conclusion, the study highlighted that through the investigation of art practice and its knowledge dissemination within the various forms of the presentations, the researcher was convinced that the study of creative process and its analysis related to self-awareness, experiences, background, and local cultural roots might lead to the understanding of artists and their concepts. On top of that, these creative processes and their findings might generate the metaphorical images of the artistic learning process that represented both the value of art and infinite artist's spiritual identity development.

Keywords: *Artistic Creative Process, Artistic Learning Process, Symbolism in Art*

INTRODUCTION

The process of art-making was categorized into a scientific process which combined with the research skill and the artistic shapes and forms' creation that somehow not only interpreted its meaning and but also the emotional and aesthetical effects. In addition, the process of art-making might raise the artistic learning process paralleled with innovative wisdom that could be disseminated and become the inspiration to all levels of art practitioners and even the learning foundation that might lead people who are interested in art approaching the art understanding.

As it appeared in the principles of art learning and experiencing that consisted of 4 parts such as the study of concept of art-making, the study of forms of art-making, the art practice, and the art criticism that would support the process of art analysis and might lead to the understanding of the value of art and its evaluation. Furthermore, these kinds of processes eventually would be the social benefits and result in the process of artistic learning development which might encourage people to improve their artistic skills, experiences, and literacy becoming the individual aesthetical standard based on each one's attitude or the so-called "taste".

Hence, through this research aims that focused on the study of artist and his artworks by its learning and study through the related theories included human behaviour, culture, beliefs and religions, principles of art and art history, techniques and so on, it could be claimed that this process was the process of learning and experience as mentioned above. The objectives of this research were 1. To study and develop the artworks that represented the spiritual identity improvement, 2. To analyse the gained specific insight associated with the art practice and its relationships to the artistic creative process and the artistic learning processes, 3. To study the artworks and its influences in terms of the development of the concept related to attitude, experiences, and spiritual development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Through the reviews of literature and related documentary research, the findings could disclose interesting information, for example;

1. The Artistic Creative Process (The Process of Art-Making)

1.1 The concept and its relationships to the background and cultural roots

In terms of the concept of these series of artworks, there were not only the presentation of the individual ideas and their identities, but the personal ambition to define the new way of artistic representation related to the value of art and the aesthetical aspect that focused on the less natural imitation alongside the realistic form or style of art-making. In other words, it might be the way of the artist trying to find the artistic identity following the Basic Needs of Maslow's law (Newman & Di Capprio, 1983, as cited in Rangson ChomYa, 2005).

1.2 The artistic forms or the art movement

The artistic form or the art movement used as the reference to analyse and clearly describe the creative works in this project was the "nostalgia art". According to Kasin Insawang, the definition of nostalgia art was the effect of individual experiences of the artist which had played a significant role in the nostalgia circumstance's drive that might be strongly related to the concept, experience, and memory (Kasin Insawang, 2016). Through the study of this research, the finding revealed that the artworks of each series had the relationship using the same style or form of art-making. In other words, the nostalgia art had played a crucial role in this project's forms and techniques in which it was the new way of interpretation of nostalgia art; making the differences far from the traditional one. In addition, instead of creating the conventional storytelling using the atmosphere, surrounded environment, space and colour, some kind of abstract presentation and its lesser forms and the distortion become the metaphorical images making which represented the artist's self-challenging in terms of the issues of working in a different context, being in between or on the periphery related to the Diasporas, migration or working among the unfamiliar atmosphere in terms of different physical environments and cultures.

1.3 Techniques

The technique used within this project was the mixed media painting applying previous works as the foundation added with various layers of shapes and forms on the transparent acrylic sheets which played a significant role in each artwork's symbol interpretation. On the other hand, the concept of this project was to reflect on the state of nostalgia paralleled with the artist's experiences, the journey of life and the spiritual development. On top of that, the metaphorical images used had developed through the processes of artistic forms and its identity's improvement and become the tangible symbols representing the abstract concept of the artworks which might be understood and interpreted diversely among individual perspectives.

2. The Artistic Learning Processes

Through the study, the finding disclosed that the artistic learning processes might be the combination between the process of knowledge development and the process of value realization which is related to the aesthetical aspect focusing on the perception of qualification, selection, control and the process of art-making. On top of that, the artist's creative process had to be developed based on artistic skills and the knowledge of principles of design in art alongside composition in art and its relationship to the elements of art which might result in the valuable artworks (Chutima Vethakarn, 2008).

2.1 The process of knowledge development

2.1.1 The creative process and its influences and inspiration

In 2007, Siriorn Wichchawut highlighted that behaviourism's concept followed B.F. Skinner's theory which was the idea that humans or animals have repetitive behaviour and the behaviour of learning preference through the reinforcement might changeably lead to either negative or positive behaviours. Through the study, the finding revealed that human behaviour and its relationships to psychological issues had played a significant role in the creative process in terms of artwork's concept (Siriorn Wichchawut et al., 2007). These aspects are namely;

2.1.1.1 The aspect of memory, experience and nostalgia

Nostalgia is a kind of individual human behaviour related to the imagination or the conceptual identity presenting the way of life, memory and experience which could diversely be developed based on each one's perspective. Moreover, the key factors are time and place that might lead to the changeable forms of nostalgia becoming unique followed the social trend or conditions (Pattana Kitti-Arsa, 2003, as cited in Kasin Insawang, 2016). In other words, through the Calvin O. Schrag's theory and its related aspects of art-making and its concept, nostalgia is a kind of creative thinking based on the individual imagination, memory and past. In addition, nostalgia is defined as non-linear imaging representing individual memories and experiences related to own one's social relationships (Schrag, 1992, as cited in Kasin Insawang, 2016).

2.1.1.2 The aspect culture and the way of life

The way of life or culture is the study of human behaviour and its relationships to society in which the process of learning and the dissemination of culture are done in order to support individual way of life and social development related to the issues of ethics, custom, tradition, attitude, faith and belief, and the inventions that might constantly be changed due to global trends (time and place). On the other hand, this awareness is important and its dissemination might be completed through the education system or non-education system becoming the influence to artist's process of art-making which clearly represents the local social identity by the use of artistic symbolism (Juthapan Jamjuree Phadung-Chevit, 2008).

2.1.1.2.1 Faith and belief and its influences to the spiritual development

Through the study, belief is the condition of acceptance of the real existence of objects or every single thing related to people and the society which influences a human's way of life generating positive and negative effects, even if these things could not be scientifically proven (Royal Academy, 1981). In this research, the finding highlighted that "belief" becomes part of the key elements of spiritual development associated with Steward Hall's cultural root theory and the process of artworks analysis which Araeen Rasheed further stated that through the study of creative works, could not only be completed by artist's background exploration but the study of cultural root and its other related cultural contexts might be investigated (Araeen Rasheed, 2000, as cited in Ohm Pattanachoti, 2012).

On the other hand, from 2009 to 2012, a researcher who was working on a Ph.D. project was led to the self-scrutiny in terms of cultural root, cultural identity, belief, experiences and memories which eventually found that the state of diaspora or displacement became the keyword used during the process of art-making and its concept development. Furthermore, the finding of the Ph.D. project was the information that led to the understanding of self-awareness related to Thai-ness alongside Buddhist and Christian beliefs. In conclusion, the knowledge found within the project represented the artist's personal identity that in his perspective, being "a good person" could not only be defined by the religious belief but the way of doing and the attitude which might be changed by time, place and social norms. In other words, the concept that artists develop and create in their artworks represents their self-awareness of the social trends in terms of customs and traditions which has nothing to do with the state of being good within the artists' way of life (being Thai artist, having Buddhist and Christian belief) and becomes his spiritual identity developing through the process of art making (Ohm Pattanachoti, 2012).

2.2 The process of art appreciation development and its aesthetical effects

2.2.1 The process of spiritual development through the use of aesthetical value

Art is the creative process that merges with the aesthetical fruition through the use of data transformation and its form. In other words, the information would be changed to the metaphorical images or the symbols in order to interpret the concept of the artworks following the four principles of creative work such as; 1. *Play*, through the concept of that activity, it might fulfil human life above the basic needs, 2. *Artistic Forms*, the art movement and its character associated with time and place, 3. *Aesthetic*, the perception and reflection related to art appreciation and the emotional effects due to the art value, and 4. *The Transformation-Representation*, the change of abstract form to the tangible images and its interpretation (Alland, 1977, as cited in Harris, 1993).

Hence, through this project analysis, it can be concluded that the artworks create the aesthetical effects and result in the blissful spiritual improvement or in other words, the use of artistic symbolism reflected the individual artistic identity. Furthermore, while embarking on the creative works it might raise the happiness and the spiritual achievement (the self-awareness related to the goal of life, spiritual development, and its approach strategy), parallel with the emotional effects of both artist and audience becoming the body of knowledge that could transfer to the next generation.

2.2.2 The evaluative process of artwork

According to the Greek scholar "Homer" (400-300 B.C.), if the value of art is beauty, the understanding of aesthetic is logically needed due to its definition that "the beauty was magic and above anyone's awareness, in other words, the beauty was unique and sophisticated deeply in people's perception related to emotional aspect which could not easily be described to the public". Furthermore, Thai scholar and national veteran artist, Professor Chalood Nim-Samur agreed with Homer and highlighted that it needed to have an opened-mind to approach to the ground of beauty which the aesthetical appreciation in art term might require the basic elements, for instance experiences and its related practices. In addition, the standard of beauty or the trend of aesthetical perception might transform constantly era to era depending on the aesthetical principles such as time and place which are the key factors. On top of that, through Silpa Phirasri's point of view, the founder of Thai modern art schooling "Poh Chang College and Silpakorn University" aesthetically stated that the beauty in terms of art is not only considered by nice shapes and forms, perfect composition and the significant skills and techniques but also the conceptual issue. Hence, the concepts with great willingness and attitude of artist interpreting through the artworks in order to encourage audiences to have the spiritual development and intellectual improvement are key to success. In other words, the art value and its evaluation within the artworks might conceptually include the combination of aesthetic (beauty), logic (reality) and morality (goodness) which might lead to the universal acknowledgment of the beauty beyond the trap of aesthetical standard of each era (Ithipol Tang-Chalok, 2007). In addition, Kamjorn

SoonPhongsri further commented that the issue of beauty might not only be considered through the art philosophy mentioned above related to the value of art and its beauty but other considerations would include other disciplines, for example; Metaphysics, Epistemology, Ethical Philosophy and Logic which are all associated with the basic key elements such as origination, responsibility, category, methodology and the essence of reality alongside the axiology study in order to precisely understand and able to evaluate art and its beauty through the holistic aesthetical elements (Kamjorn SoonPhongsri, 2012).

3. The Symbolism in Art

3.1 Thai-ness

Thai-ness originates from different key factors, for example, the migration, the cultural development, custom and tradition and Buddhist belief of local South East Asia which could be stated as the context of Thai-ness origination paralleled with the way of life underneath the Buddhist influence and the prosperity generated by natural resources of the tropical rainforest. On top of that, the advantage of living within the tropical rainforest climate might generate the melting pot of a unique Thai manner of kindness appearing on people's face claimed as well-known Thai smile character. In the same way, Thai art is claimed as the high art or fine art created by artists who have the local cultural background reflecting the state of mind or the spiritual development that develops over time through the artistic creative process for instance, Thai ornament or decoration and Thai traditional painting telling the story related to Thai belief associated with Buddhism.

In other words, Thai-ness could be seen through cultural roots and their development which interestingly shapes Thai identity and its relationships with art and culture. Furthermore, cultural blending is the Thais' great ability which could be noticed by being good at learning, selecting and applying the best aspects from surrounding influences such as tradition, custom and belief of other cultures. As mentioned above, regional climate, Buddhist doctrine and Thai regime of Absolute Monarchy in the past is an integrated creation of Thai-ness of that period of time to this present day. Thai identity might be identified through its relationships to political systems, religion, attitudes or perspectives and especially their King culminating alongside the effects of globalization (Ohm Pattanachoti, 2017).

3.2 Thai Art

Thai art has developed through local wisdom establishment associated with multicultural societies of the South East Asian territory which is significantly influenced by Indian, Chinese, *Phu-Gam* (Burmese or Myanmar), *Khmer* (Cambodia) and other related cultures through *Siam* (Thailand) being the ancient trading centre itself which means the Christian belief, Islamic belief and so on could be noticed since ancient time. There is such a long journey for Thai aesthetic foundation which is gradually developed through regional local culture, tradition and customs associated with faith and belief and the way of life until then becoming a definition of "Thai-ness (Thai Identity)" where Buddhism has played a crucial role in its progress. Furthermore, Thailand's wealth and prosperity influenced by rich natural resources due to tropical monsoon region might lead to the well-known strong character of people of the "Land of Smiles". In addition, by art-making process and concept analysis in terms of cultural influential elements and awareness, it can be disclosed that the Thais' high-minded character has shined through art practice including *Lia-Thai* (Thai Decorative Drawing) and Thai Mural Paintings which could be seen by its neatness and beauty representing stories and the way of life associated with Buddhism.

The development of Thai Art and its definition can be revealed through the relationships between artist (craftsman) and patron who in the past since ancient times up to early modern times were Thai Kings and royal family alongside Buddhist temple which were the centre of Thai communities. In the past, Thai craftsman were considered genuine artists creating great works of art classified as fine art which represented the diversity of the Thai supreme culture and wisdom. In other words, Thai artisans

were not only the national treasure makers themselves but also cultural ambassadors, producing and representing masterpieces reflecting the golden age of Thai culture and its use as the symbol of the country's prosperity. Unfortunately, at present, Chang-Sib-Mhoo (artisan or master who created 10 divisions of creative products or national treasures) cannot be equally accepted as a real artist or *Silapin* among Thai people's point of view due to the lower class of art form and its other related aspects including process of making, popularity and cultural trend. On the other hand, "civilization" was the term that King Rama V (1853-1910) used to be the model to improve the Thai Kingdom to become a developed country avoiding colonization, paralleled with westernization which has changed Thai's art education and core disciplines in terms of art-making. Generally speaking, pure art for the Thai society has to be classified and criticised in terms of its prestige within western knowledge standard and other related academic art theories which directly affect Thai's traditional art-making and lead to its downtrend. Even though Thai traditional art experienced less popularity for a long period of time since civilized and developed countries were promoted, in contrast, on this day, fortunately there are various official campaigns involved with Thai traditional art featuring Thai identity and its unique cultural characters to promote Thailand's reputation as a dream destination for tourism purposes which leads to the return of Thai traditional art or cultural treasures and this increases its popularity. Thai Chang-Sib-Mhoo's cultural treasures' productions which play crucial roles in Thai image (Thai-ness) can be categorized into 10 divisions, which are namely;

1. *Chang Kien* (Drawing and Painting): drawing and painting created by artisan to serve monarchy and religious purposes; this can be observed through mural paintings and its related decorative works.
2. *Chang Kae* (Engraving): includes all kinds of engraving through the use of several materials such as metal, gold, silver, bronze, wood and so on which become standalone crafts or jewellery or architecture decorative purposes.
3. *Chang Pun* (Sculpture): can be seen in its creation under religious purpose, cultural preservation and national treasure purposes; there are architecture decorative sculptures using local materials such as leaves, paper, plaster, metal and so on alongside decorative fruit and vegetable engravings.
4. *Chang Hoon* (Model): there are various Thai modelling including puppets and figures, masks, and stucco sculptural and architectural modelling.
5. *Chang Kae Nang* (Leather Figuring Carving): a storytelling media through the use of animal, plant, and figurative image leather carvings associated with light and shadow performances.
6. *Chang Kleung* (Turning): for instance; lathe working, carpentering and ivory carving.
7. *Chang Poon* (Plastering): plaster and stucco.
8. *Chang Hlor* (Molding): Buddha image-making, bronze and metal casting, clay and bee's wax modelling.
9. *Chang Ruk* (Lacquering): lacquer work, gilding, glass mosaic, mother-or-pearl inlay work, Buddha images, wooden panels carving and pictorial gilding.
10. Beating: metal beating, monk's bowl making, jewellers and silversmith.

Jitragum Thai (Thai traditional drawing and painting) is created using line and colour to represent symbolism and stories associated with Buddhist doctrine, Thai culture and way of life in order to develop awareness among Thais under an artist's control and his invention in terms of contents, techniques and forms becoming a great unique character of Thai drawing and painting called "*Jitragum Thai*".

Furthermore, Thai traditional drawings and paintings can be observed through several kinds of forms such as decorative paintings of architecture for instance, mural paintings on the Buddhist temple walls, palaces and other related significant places, alongside book illustrations, scrolls and canvases, religious decorative furniture and other instruments, and so on.

4. Forms and styles of *Jitragum Thai* (Thai Traditional Drawing and Painting)

As mentioned above, Thais are good at applying all kinds of wisdom from several cultures such as the Indian, Chinese, Burmese, *Khmer* and other related cultures in South East Asia and using them as resources for their own cultural development which shines through Thai art, its forms and styles. In other words, *Jitragum Thai* is developed through the use of cultural diversity and its influences becoming their own styles and art forms which showcase great characters, for instance;

4. 1 Idealistic Surrealist Style: Through its well-known reputation of Thai traditional drawing and painting identity, artisans develop the characters of main figures through the use of dramatic poses or postures to represent surrealist style of characters, or in other words, emotional representation that can be noticed by leading figures' poses rather than realistic styles of faces or their features. In contrast, the use of western realistic style in Thai Traditional painting creates main figures' characters in which the emotional symbolism can be seen through facial presentation. For example, *Yak* or *Marn* (the bad villain leading figures) characters' developments are created in order to present their muscularity and cruelty through their face shapes and their details. Furthermore, the animal symbolism is created by capturing its identity and unique characters and the use of the artist's own ideas or styles of character development. On the other hand, in terms of the water symbolism development in Thai traditional painting without western influence, local artists design the so-called "*Lai Klet Pla*" (Fish Scale Decorative Design) decoration as constant overlapping lines representing characters of water waves instead of realistic styles using light and shadow following the academic western style. In terms of Thai traditional drawing and paintings, it can be concluded that Thai artists create art forms through the use of their own ideas and imagination by developing the narrative underneath Buddhist and multiculturalism influences. These art forms and their styles are subsequently accepted as Thai identity with alongside their neatness, fineness and sublimity.
4. 2 Bird's Eye View Perspective Usage: There is a usage of aerial perspective in Thai traditional painting to empower people to have a clear vision of the narrative picture (the ability to see through all details of an image) which is different from the western style where perspective usage results in the complexity of images.
4. 3 Lack of Perspective: The narrative images are created by a two-dimensional art form. In addition, the use of western academic style following the theory of perspective is not yet introduced, in conversion, the association with flat colour usage and colour toning is arranged and applied to main figures painting without the theory of light, shadow and proportion. On the other hand, the use of gold leaf and outlining of the main figure with different tones of colours is the trend to present the focusing figure and surround the area; a skill associated with a veteran or master of that field.
4. 4 The used of "*Sin Thao Line*" (Decorative Designed Line used for scenario separation or connection) and other related symbols such as rocks, trees, the sky and so on to separate or join the narrative part which represents each story related to Buddhist myths. Furthermore, *Sin Thao Line* can be used as each painting's working area identification due to its unity in terms of composition management, design and concept which each artist has to deal with.
4. 5 The use of repetition of symbols to encouraged people to recognize the important stories in *Sha-dok* (Buddhist myth or ancient stories of Buddha) is popular among Thai artists or painting masters where similar narrative and composition are the keywords.
4. 6 Decorative Thai Design inspired by natural or organic forms are developed and used as space management and its problem-solving tool. In other words, this is known as the narrative character of Thai Traditional Painting using figures as focal point for storytelling alongside symbols such as rocks, trees, ponds, clouds and others to unify the picture, *Kra-Jang* and *Kra Nok* (Thai Decorative Design) are the best tools to manage the space.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Due to its character of qualitative and creative research, the processes consist of 3 parts, which are namely;

Documentary Research

This consists of the study or the review of literature through books, research articles, catalogues and other related papers in order to gain specific insights and information that might lead to the development of the concept of art-making.

Field Research

In-Depth Interview

This consists of the data collection process through the use of questionnaire which surveyed the respondents' satisfaction with a research population that includes a group of 20 students from the Art Program of Chiang Rai Rajabhat University attending the exhibition of 2017 Art Thesis from 26th to 31st May 2017, a group of 20 students from Poh Chang College of Art who participated in the 12th International Art Workshop and Exhibition from 31st January to 3rd February 2017, a group of 10 lecturers and officers from Chiang Rai Rajabhat University and a group of 10 lecturers and officers from Poh Chang College of Art.

Focus Group

This consists of other data collection processes that are determined through a group seminar by 10 local artists, artisans and scholars discussing the artwork's process, concept of artwork's development, art value and its evaluation and so on. In addition, the focus group data collection process and its related data analysis can be divided into 3 crucial parts such as the identity of the artistic creative process, the knowledge of artistic learning process and the process of spiritual development of the artists.

Artworks Production, Analysis and Discussion

This consists of the study of artworks and its influences in terms of the development of the concept related to attitude, experiences, cultural roots and the spiritual development which is part of the research methodology paralleled with the exploration of art practice and its evaluation or assessment in order to gain the particular knowledge related to 3 crucial parts; firstly, the artistic creative process (the process of art-making) which includes the concept and its relationships to the background and cultural roots alongside the artistic forms and techniques, secondly, the artistic learning processes and finally, the symbolism in art.

RESEARCH POPULATION

In this research project, the research population is designed and divided into 2 major categories; the audiences and the specialists in the art field which provide information related to the degree of satisfaction, understanding and the effects gained from the artworks' observation. Furthermore, the data includes information highlighting the number of audiences who realise the aesthetical effects of artworks through focus group data collection process and its related data analysis which was divided

into 3 crucial parts such as the identity of the artistic creative process, the knowledge of artistic learning process and the process of spiritual development of the artists. As a result, the research population can be observed in 2 groups, which are namely;

Groups of Audiences; Including

1. A group of 20 students of Art Program from Chiang Rai Rajabhat University attending the exhibition of 2017 Art Thesis from 26th to 31st May 2017.
2. A group of 20 students from Poh Chang College of Art attending the 12th International Art Workshop and Exhibition from 31st January to 3rd February 2017.
3. A group of 10 lecturers and officers from Chiang Rai Rajabhat University attending the exhibition of 2017 Art Thesis from 26th to 31st May 2017
4. The group of 10 lecturers and officers from Poh Chang College of Art attending the 12th International Art Workshop and Exhibition from 31st January to 3rd February 2017.

Group of Specialists in Art Field; Including

A group of 10 local artists, artisans and scholars.

RESEARCH TOOLS AND THEIR DEVELOPMENT

There are 3 kinds of research tools including;

In-Depth Interview

This interview surveyed the respondents' satisfaction through the use of questionnaire on the research population mentioned above.

Focus Group

This consists of group discussion related to the series of the post-Ph.D. artworks titled "The series of 'Spiritual Identity: The Overlay of Memories (Endless) no.1 - no 8'" and other related works by local artists, artisans and scholars.

Data Collection

The process of data collection included;

1. Documentary Research
2. Field Research
3. In-Depth Interview
4. Focus Group
5. Artworks Production, Analysis and Discussion
6. Conclusion and Discussion

FINDINGS

Table 1 Degree of satisfaction, understanding and effects gained from the artworks' observation

Lists	\bar{x}	S.D.	Meaning
Overall picture	4.5		High Rate
1. There were aesthetical effects and relationships to the balance of composition within the artworks.	4.7	0.5	High Rate
2. The emotional effects were revealed through the audiences' observation.	4.4	0.5	High Rate
3. Through artistic symbols represented within the artworks, it might lead to the understanding of the concept of art-making.	4.4	0.6	High Rate
4. The impression gained through the unique techniques and its picturesqueness effects followed the concept of artworks.	4.4	0.7	High Rate
5. Through artworks and their caption study, it was crystal clear that the metaphorical images could give audiences the identity related to artists' experiences and attitudes.	4.5	0.6	High Rate
6. Through artworks and their concept study, it was crystal clear that the metaphorical images could give audiences the artists' beliefs which reflect the Thai-ness.	4.6	0.6	High Rate
7. The artworks raised the question among audiences in terms of their interpretations and individually encouraged them to investigate the artworks to get the answers.	4.5	0.6	High Rate

Table 2 Number of audiences appreciating the artworks exhibited in the 2017 Art Thesis Exhibition from 26th to 31st May 2017 at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University (classified by educational qualification levels)

Educational Qualification	Number	Percentage
Undergraduate	20	76.7
Graduate	10	23.3
Total	30	100

Table 3 Number of audiences appreciating the artworks and having the understanding of their concept alongside aesthetical effects at the 12th International Art Workshop and Exhibition from 31st January to 3rd February 2017 (classified by educational qualification levels)

Educational Qualification	Number	Percentage
Undergraduate	20	76.7
Graduate	10	23.3
Total	30	100

Table 4 Number of audiences realising the aesthetical effects of artworks through focus group data collection process and its related data analysis which was divided into 3 crucial parts; the identity of the artistic creative process, the knowledge of artistic learning process and the process of spiritual development of the artists

Lists	Number	Percentage
The Identity of Artistic Creative Process	3	30
The Artistic Learning Process	5	50
The Process of Spiritual Development of Artists	2	20
Total	10	100

Data Analysis and Discussion

Through field works, the information gained from the in-depth interview and the focus group, the data can be presented into a descriptive form which reveals that the audiences who attended both exhibitions; the 2017 Art Thesis Exhibition from 26th to 31st May 2017 at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University and the 12th International Art Workshop and Exhibition during the date of 31st January to 3rd February 2017 had a high rate of appreciation level related to the aspect of artistic creative process, the artistic learning process and the aesthetical effects. Furthermore, the information also highlights that the understanding about art among audiences with a higher qualification level (graduate level) was less than audiences with the undergraduate qualification. A possible explanation behind this is that understanding of art is an individual experience that is not related to one's educational qualification. On the other hand, the information gained from the focus group presents a group consensus that they all have learned about the art-making process and its value realising the understanding about the artistic learning process and its dissemination and the individual spiritual development.

On the other hand, through the study, the information gained from artworks analysis leads to the conclusion and its discussion, which are namely;

In figure 1, the Pre-Doctoral Project, the series of 'Faith and Belief: Assembly of Love No. 1 - 4', created in Thailand during the years of 2007 and 2008, they reflect on the researcher or artist's cultural background and spiritual identity in terms of Thai-ness based on beliefs related to Buddhism

and Christianity which identify the artist's state of mind or spiritual condition associated with specific time and place. In this case, the finding disclosed that the painting's concept referred to the artist's state of mind reflecting the balance of life through Buddhist and Christian practices alongside the journey of life, experiences and nostalgia. On the other hand, the use of human shapes and forms alongside the labyrinths and mazes influenced by the Buddhist and Christian artistic symbols plays a significant role in creating artworks associated with the use of geometric forms and the Buddhist begging bowl which metaphorically symbolises the body or the spiritual container representing the real essence of life and the endless journey according to the artist's perspective. Moreover, the techniques used in this project are painstaking and neat in the creative process called "step by step or incremental brush stroke" which also reflect the authentic spirit of Thai-ness.

In figure 2, the Doctoral Project, the series of 'Spiritual Identity: the Overlay of Memories no.1 - 4' created in Australia during the years of 2009 to 2012, they present the artist's spiritual development in terms of balance of life which becomes a major aspect in order to understand and generate self-awareness through the use of designed symbols within the creative works, reflecting the artistic identity associated with the artist's local cultural root, experiences, the belief underneath multiculturalism's influences and other related issues such as the relationships between time, place (diaspora/ in-between state) and nostalgia.

In figure 3 - 6, these projects were organized during the return to Thailand from 2013 to 2019 and the appointment as the art instructor of Chiang Rai Rajabhat University in order to constantly explore deeper into the self-inner land and study more the influences which are reflected into the works of art and their concept and inspiration. In summary, the finding reveals that the concept was conducted on the state of spiritual development related to the artist's journey of life, experiences and nostalgia alongside the development of artistic techniques using mixed media which create the metaphorical images through the use of secular and religious symbols.

Through the use of nostalgia, the investigation embarked on the use of overlay imaging techniques producing the overlapping shapes and forms of humans (unperfected forms) symbolising self-belief, attitude and spiritual identity associated with religious and non-religious belief alongside basic human instincts. Beyond that, the sophisticated interpretation with the sense of humour plays a crucial role in these projects and becomes a key element which presents the state of mind, the social standard in terms of morality and being good and its satire. In addition, the use of unperfected human forms, inappropriate character (sexually performed) and the Buddhist begging bowl shapes metaphorically symbolises the artist's attitude which focuses on the state of being good and questioning to the public that being a good person is not only defined based on religious belief and morality but also the holistic social fabric.

In other words, due to the Thai norm in terms of morality (being good), mentioning sexual aspect is inappropriate and touches on the sensitivity of religion and its relationships to sexual interpretation which is not expected to appear together in the social narrow-minded perspective which results in these creative projects using sharp and controversial aspects to work on and clarify the artist's point of view. On the other hand, the spiritual development is found to present self-awareness and the understanding of life which can be done through the study of artworks and their relationships with the artist's background and the upcoming life journey which might be designed based on and follow the recent success due to the gained insight leading to a higher spiritual development with ideally balanced life.



Figure 1 The Pre-Doctoral Project, the series of ‘Faith and belief: Assembly of Love No. 1- 4’, 2007 - 2008, 150 x 180 cm, 162 x 245 cm, acrylic and ballpoint pen on canvas (left to right)



Figure 2 The Doctoral Project, the series of ‘Spiritual Identity: The Overlay of Memories No. 1 - 4’, 2009 - 2012, 150 x 180 cm, acrylic and ballpoint pen on canvas (left to right)



Figure 3 The Post-Doctoral Project, the series of ‘Spiritual Identity: The Overlay of Memories No. 5 - 8’, 2013 - 2017, various sizes, acrylic and ballpoint pen on canvas (left to right)



Figure 4 The Recent Project, the series of ‘Spiritual Identity: The Overlay of Memories (Endless) No. 1 - 8’, 2017 - 2018, various sizes, mixed media (left to right)



Figure 5 The Recent Project, the series of ‘Spiritual Identity: The Overlay of Memories (Endless) No. 9 - 10’, 2019, various sizes, mixed media (left to right)

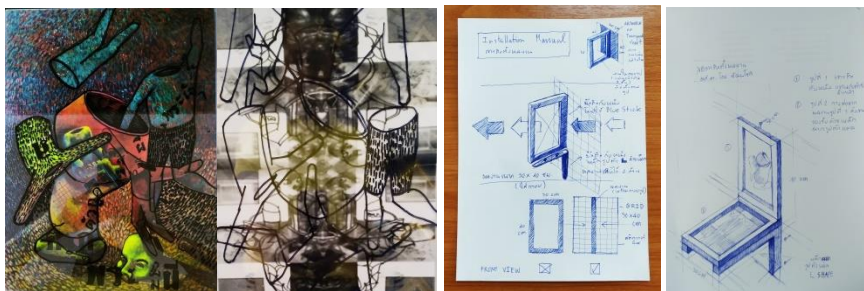


Figure 6 The Recent Project, the series of ‘Spiritual Identity: The Overlay of Memories (the Endless Nostalgia) No. 11 and its installation manual, 2019, 30 x 40 cm each, the installation of mixed media painting (the drawing and letterpress on previous work prints)

CONCLUSION

Through the study, the findings reveal that artists have the ambition not only to create artworks in order to present self-attitude in terms of art and its aesthetical value but also visualise the social trends by the metaphorical images questioning against social norms of morality and their qualification of being in a good state. Furthermore, these projects aim to point out the significant elements of the creative process, the art learning process and the study of symbolism in art. On top of that, the artists also believe that the holistic scrutiny through cultural background alongside the art-making process would lead to the body of knowledge discovery and its dissemination and might contribute to the public in terms of further research and art practice later on.

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